



american composers orchestra

news release

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**American Composers Orchestra
Orchestra Underground: *Monk's Sphere*
2014-2015 Season Opening Concert**



Meredith Monk. Photos available in high res at www.christinajensenpr.com.

George Manahan, Music Director

**Friday, November 21, 2014 at 7:30pm
Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall | 57th & 7th Ave. | NYC**

**Performances by the Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble,
Theo Bleckmann, and Ian Williams**

Featuring Meredith Monk's *Night*

World premiere of Theo Bleckmann's *My Brightest Garment*

World premiere of Ian Williams' *Clear Image*

World premiere of A.J. McCaffrey's *Motormouth*

New York premiere of Loren Loiacono's *Stalks, Hounds*

For more information: www.americancomposers.org

**Tickets: \$43 & 50 at www.carnegiehall.org, 212-247-7800,
or the Carnegie Hall Box Office (154 West 57th Street, NYC)**

New York, NY – **American Composers Orchestra** (ACO) opens its 38th season with **Orchestra Underground: *Monk's Sphere*** led by ACO Music Director **George Manahan** on Friday, November 21, 2014 at 7:30pm at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall. The concert's centerpiece is *Night*, a rare orchestral work by pioneering composer and performer **Meredith Monk**, holder of the 2014–2015 Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair at Carnegie Hall, performed by ACO with the **Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble**. Monk protégé **Theo Bleckmann**, a longtime member of the Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble, contributes and performs in *My Brightest Garment*, a new song for orchestra commissioned by Carnegie Hall for the occasion. The concert also features the world premiere of *Clear Image*, a raucous first orchestral piece by experimental-rock guitarist **Ian Williams** (of the band Battles), commissioned by ACO; *Motormouth*, a world premiere by rising-star composer and ACO's 2013 Underwood Commission winner **A.J. McCaffrey** based on his experience as the father of a toddler; and the New York premiere of **Loren Loiacono's** *Stalks, Hounds* which synthesizes the composer's childhood remembrances of Barbie's Dreamhouse and her later discovery of Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe*.

In addition to the works performed on *Monk's Sphere*, ACO's 2014-2015 season includes premieres by a diverse group of composers including **Wynton Marsalis, Ian Williams, Courtney Bryan, Uri Caine, Carman Moore, and Daniel Schnyder**, plus performances by **Shara Worden** (*My Brightest Diamond*), vocal ensemble **Hudson Shad**, and Caine. In addition to **Kurt Weill's** *The Seven Deadly Sins*, ACO will also perform music by Worden's pop alter-ego **My Brightest Diamond** and selections from **Sarah Kirkland Snider's** haunting pastoral *Unremembered* in February. In April, ACO gives the New York premiere of Wynton Marsalis' *Blues Symphony* at **Jazz at Lincoln Center**; the concert will also feature a world premiere commissioned by ACO from **Courtney Bryan**, a past participant in ACO's **Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute**, plus a revised and expanded version of **Uri Caine's** *Double Trouble* commissioned by ACO.

Founded in 1977, American Composers Orchestra remains the only orchestra in the world dedicated exclusively to the creation, performance, preservation, and promulgation of music by American composers. To date, ACO has performed music by more than 700 American composers, including more than 300 world premieres and newly commissioned works. ACO's Orchestra Underground, named for Zankel Hall (its subterranean state-of-the-art home) as well as the series' subversive nature, seeks to reinvent the orchestra with new works that challenge convention, with diverse influences, unusual instruments and influences, multimedia and multi-disciplinary collaborations.

Meredith Monk: *Night*

For more information: www.meredithmonk.org

Meredith Monk is a composer, singer, and creator of new opera and music-theater works. A pioneer in "extended vocal technique," Monk has been hailed as a "magician of the voice" and "one of America's coolest composers." Her groundbreaking exploration of the voice as an instrument and eloquent language in and of itself expands the boundaries of musical composition. Recently Monk was named an Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters by the Republic of France. She has also received the Founders Award from New Music USA and has been named Composer of the Year by *Musical America*, a Doris Duke Artist, and one of NPR's 50 Great Voices. In addition, Monk has created vital new repertoire for orchestra, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments. She has received commissions from New World Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Kronos Quartet, Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale. Monk has made more than a dozen recordings and her music has been featured in films by Jean-Luc Godard and the Coen Brothers, among others. Her work has been presented by Lincoln Center Festival, BAM, Houston Grand Opera, London's Barbican Centre and at major venues from Brazil to Syria. Monk's numerous honors include a Grammy nomination for *impermanence*, a MacArthur "Genius" Award, two Guggenheim Fellowships, an American Music Center Letter of Distinction, an ASCAP Concert Music Award, and induction into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She holds honorary Doctor of Arts degrees from Bard College, the University of the Arts, The Juilliard School, the San Francisco Art Institute, and Boston Conservatory. Monk is Carnegie Hall's 2014-2015 Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair.

Monk originally composed *Night* in 1996 for ten voices, two keyboards, violin and French horn. She later felt that it would benefit from a richer orchestration, and worked with Allison Sniffin, one of her close associates, to create a new rendering, scored for voices and an unusual ensemble of instruments that includes saxophones, synthesizer, bowed psaltery, and a variety of percussion instruments. Much of the work is based on a Hungarian minor scale, which prompted in the composer's mind recollections of travels

through the former Yugoslavia. That land was then in the midst of a bloody war, a tragedy that inevitably affected the emotional complexion of the music.

Theo Bleckmann: *My Brightest Garment*

(World Premiere, Carnegie Hall Commission) For more information:

www.thebleckmann.com

The New York Times has lauded composer and singer **Theo Bleckmann** as “a vocalist of inventive instinct and assiduous musicality.” The Grammy-nominated and ECHO award recipient makes music that is accessibly sophisticated, unsentimentally emotional and seriously playful, leading his work to be described as “from another planet” (*The New York Times*), as “magical, futuristic” (*AllAboutJazz*), and “brilliant” (*New York Magazine*). Bleckmann has released a series of albums on Winter & Winter, including recordings of Las Vegas standards, Weimar art songs and popular “bar songs” (with pianist Fumio Yasuda), a recording of newly-arranged songs by Charles Ives (with jazz/rock collective Kneebody), his acoustic *Solos for Voice* “*I dwell in possibility*” and his highly acclaimed *Hello Earth*, the music of Kate Bush. His most current project is a song cycle dealing with the delicate subject matter of death, *songs in the key of d* featuring harpist Zeena Parkins. Bleckmann has collaborated with such musicians, artists, actors and composers as Laurie Anderson, Uri Caine, Philip Glass, Ann Hamilton, John Hollenbeck, Sheila Jordan, Phil Kline, David Lang, Kirk Nurock, Frances MacDormand, Ben Monder, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kenny Wheeler, John Zorn, the Bang on a Can All-stars, and Meredith Monk, with whom Bleckmann worked as a core ensemble member for over 20 years.

Bleckmann describes *My Brightest Garment* as “an orchestral song about death as a vanishing act, a magic trick of sorts; pondering the ‘now you see it - now you don’t’ aspect, while wearing the most beautiful, brightest garment to pull it off.” Bleckmann, the composer, lyricist, and vocalist, will use live electronic processing during the performance.

Ian Williams: *Clear Image*

(World Premiere, ACO/Goelet Commission)

Ian Williams is a guitarist, electronicist, and composer. His status as a rock musician has always existed in the realm of hyphenated distinctions (experimental-rock, electro-rock, post-rock, math-rock, etc.), although none quite fit. His music has always balanced somewhere between complexity and accessibility, falling more to one side or the other each time. In 2002, he started the band Battles, in which he plays guitar, keyboard and electronics. Battles has released two full albums and a series of EPs with Warp Records. In the past Williams was a key member of the group Don Caballero which was based in Pittsburgh from 1992-2000. He played guitar and released five albums with them over that time. He also spent a number of years in Chicago where he had an experimental band called Storm and Stress from 1995 until 2000, releasing two albums. In 2000, he moved to Brooklyn, where he currently resides.

Williams’ new work *Clear Image* for orchestra and electronics, commissioned by ACO with support of the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts, explores the realm between live performance and material that has been electronically enhanced. Of the inspiration for the piece, which is his first for orchestra, Williams says, “If you consider a multi-track recording where the music actually isn’t played, but just assembled, to be a lie, or an illusion, but you don’t think that’s actually a bad thing, then you might want that artificial

quality and consider it an 'enhanced' reality. How then would you preserve that improvement in music that is to be played by real musicians in real time and space?" To realize and orchestrate the piece, Williams collaborated closely with another composer/guitarist, Andrew McKenna Lee.

A.J. McCaffrey: *Motormouth*

(World Premiere, ACO/Underwood Commission) For more information: www.ajmccaffrey.com

A.J. McCaffrey is a songwriter and composer of instrumental, vocal and electronic music. His orchestral work *Thank You for Waiting* was chosen for ACO's Underwood New Music Readings, and he was subsequently awarded the 2013 Underwood Emerging Composers Commission. His works are theatrical in nature, employing harmonically rich and lyrically striking sound worlds to create dramatic narratives. His enthusiasm for other art forms has led to stimulating collaborations with filmmakers, theater companies, writers and visual artists, including Shakespeare & Company, Northern Light Productions, Ilana Halperin, and E. Tracy Grinnell. McCaffrey's music has been performed by the New Fromm Players, the Radius Ensemble, the Atlantic Chamber Ensemble, the Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Alarm Will Sound, and the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, among others. A fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center and Aspen Music Festival and School, McCaffrey has been a featured composer on Tanglewood's Festival of Contemporary Music and the New Gallery Concert Series. In addition to his concert music projects, McCaffrey is a songwriter, vocalist, and multi-instrumentalist with the alt-rock band Planes Intersect. He holds degrees in music from the University of Southern California, Rice University, and The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. He has studied composition with Richard Lavenda, James MacMillan, Donald Crockett, and Stephen Hartke.

McCaffrey's new work for ACO, *Motormouth*, is inspired by his experiences as a new father. He says, "The piece as a whole moves through the shifting instrumental colors and moods, from delirium to sleepiness, that one might encounter in a typical day of parenting." Although the piece is a single movement, it features delineated sections with referential descriptions such as "coloring outside the lines," "scribble scrabble," "motor-mouth," and "beep breaths." The piece was commissioned with support of Mr. Paul Underwood.

Loren Loiacono: *Stalks, Hounds*

(New York Premiere) For more information: www.lorenloiacono.com

Loren Loiacono is currently pursuing her Doctorate in composition at Cornell University, where she studies with Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra, and Kevin Ernste. She received her MM and BA from Yale University, where her teachers included Martin Bresnick, David Lang, Ezra Laderman, Christopher Theofanidis, Kathryn Alexander, and Michael Klingbeil. Her works have been performed by such ensembles as the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, Yale Philharmonia, Yale Symphony Orchestra, 5th House Ensemble, and the Argento Ensemble, and her music has been featured on NPR. Loiacono has received awards from ASCAP, Minnesota Orchestra Composers Institute, the National Foundation for the Advancement of the Arts, and an honorable mention from the American Composers Orchestra Underwood New Music Readings. In 2013, she was selected for a New York Youth Symphony First Music Commission, culminating in the premiere of *Against the Shrieking City Air* at Carnegie Hall in March 2014. She has been a fellow at the Bang on a Can Summer Music Festival, Norfolk

Chamber Music Festival, Copland House's CULTIVATE, the Chamber Music Conference of the East, and she received the 2010 Susan and Ford Schumann Fellowship from the Aspen Music Festival.

Loiacono's work *Stalks, Hounds* explores how a musical gesture, when taken out of context, can be transformed from meaningful to alien. She says, "As a little girl, my sisters and I spent countless hours playing a computer game based on Barbie's Dreamhouse. Years later, listening to Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloe* for the first time, I discovered, to my astonishment, that the stock pretty noise that had accompanied each click in the Barbie game was actually a nearly-verbatim quote from Ravel! The idea that something that had been so beautiful and meaningful could be so easily de-contextualized and transformed into nothing more than a stock sound was extremely unnerving, and at the same time, intriguing. In *Stalks, Hounds*, I aimed to recapture that phenomenon."

About Derek Bermel, Artistic Director

Described by the *Toronto Star* as an "eclectic with wide open ears," Grammy-nominated composer and clarinetist **Derek Bermel** has been widely acclaimed for his creativity, theatricality, and virtuosity. Bermel's works draw from a rich variety of musical genres, including classical, jazz, pop, rock, blues, folk, and gospel. Hands-on experience with music of cultures around the world has become part of the fabric and force of his compositional language. Bermel currently serves as the Artistic Director of the American Composers Orchestra and has been ACO's Artistic Adviser since 2009. Bermel is the senior composer in ACO's artistic administration, and is primarily responsible for ACO's concert programming.

In addition to his commissions from American Composers Orchestra, Bermel has received commissions from the Pittsburgh, National, Saint Louis, and Pacific Symphonies, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, WNYC, eighth blackbird, the Guarneri String Quartet, Music from Copland House and Music from China, De Ereprijs (Netherlands), Jazz Xchange (U.K.), violinist Midori, and electric guitarist Wiek Hijmans, among others. His many honors include the Alpert Award in the Arts, Rome Prize, Guggenheim and Fulbright Fellowships, American Music Center's Trailblazer Award, and Academy Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters; commissions from the Koussevitzky and Fromm Foundations, Meet the Composer, and Cary Trust; and residencies at the Institute for Advanced Study, Yaddo, Tanglewood, Aspen, Banff, Bellagio, Copland House, Sacatar, and Civitella Ranieri. His discography features three critically acclaimed discs: an all-Bermel orchestral recording that includes his clarinet concerto *Voices* (BMOP/sound); *Soul Garden* (New World/CRI); and his most recent disc, *Canzonas Americanas*, with Alarm Will Sound (Cantaloupe).

About George Manahan, Music Director

Going into his fifth season as Music Director of the American Composers Orchestra, the wide-ranging and versatile **George Manahan** has had an esteemed career embracing everything from opera to the concert stage, the traditional to the contemporary. In addition to his work with ACO, Manahan continues his commitment to working with young musicians as Director of Orchestral Studies at the Manhattan School of Music as well as guest conductor at the Curtis Institute of Music. He also serves as Music Director of the Portland Opera.

Manahan was Music Director at New York City Opera for fourteen seasons. There he helped envision the organization's groundbreaking VOX program, a series of workshops and readings that have provided unique opportunities for numerous composers to hear their new concepts realized, and introduced audiences to exciting new compositional voices. In addition to established composers such as Mark Adamo, David Del Tredici, Lewis Spratlan, Robert X. Rodriguez, Lou Harrison, Bernard Rands, and Richard Danielpour, Manahan has introduced works by composers on the rise including Adam Silverman, Elodie Lauten, Mason Bates, and David T. Little. Among his many world premieres are Charles Wuorinen's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, David Lang's *Modern Painters*, and the New York premiere of Richard Danielpour's *Margaret Garner*.

In May 2011 Manahan was honored by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his "career-long advocacy for American composers and the music of our time that has enriched and enabled Concert Music both at home and abroad." His recent Carnegie Hall performance of Samuel Barber's *Antony and Cleopatra* was hailed by audiences and critics alike. *The New York Times* reported, "the fervent and sensitive performance that Mr. Manahan presided over made the best case for this opera that I have encountered." In 2013, Manahan was awarded the Alice M. Ditson Award for his outstanding commitment to the work of emerging composers.

George Manahan's recording activities include the premiere recording of Steve Reich's *Tehillim* for ECM; recordings of Edward Thomas's *Desire Under the Elms*, which was nominated for a Grammy; Joe Jackson's *Will Power*; and Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*. As music director of the Richmond Symphony (VA) for twelve years, he was honored four times by the American Society of Composers and Publishers (ASCAP) for his commitment to 20th century music.

About ACO

Now in its 38th season, American Composers Orchestra is the only orchestra in the world dedicated to the creation, performance, preservation, and promulgation of music by American composers. ACO makes the creation of new opportunities for American composers and new American orchestral music its central purpose. Through concerts at Carnegie Hall and other venues, recordings, internet and radio broadcasts, educational programs, New Music Readings, and commissions, ACO identifies today's brightest emerging composers, champions prominent established composers as well as those lesser-known, and increases regional, national, and international awareness of the infinite variety of American orchestral music, reflecting geographic, stylistic, and temporal diversity. ACO also serves as an incubator of ideas, research, and talent, as a catalyst for growth and change among orchestras, and as an advocate for American composers and their music.

To date, ACO has performed music by more than 700 American composers, including nearly 300 world premieres and newly commissioned works. Among the orchestra's innovative programs have been SONiC: Sounds of a New Century, a nine-day citywide festival in New York of music by more than 100 composers age 40 and under; Sonidos de las Américas, six annual festivals devoted to Latin American composers and their music; Coming to America, a program immersing audiences in the ongoing evolution of American music through the work of immigrant composers; Orchestra Tech, a long-term initiative to integrate new digital technologies in the symphony orchestra; Improvise!, a festival devoted to the exploration of improvisation and the orchestra; coLABoratory: Playing It UNsafe, a new laboratory for the research and

development of experimental new works for orchestra; and Orchestra Underground, ACO's entrepreneurial cutting-edge orchestral ensemble that embraces new technology, eclectic instruments, influences, and spatial orientation of the orchestra, new experiments in the concert format, and multimedia and multi-disciplinary collaborations.

Composer development has been at the core of ACO's mission since its founding. In addition to its annual Underwood New Music Readings and Commission, ACO also provides a range of additional educational and professional development activities, including composer residencies and fellowships. In 2008, ACO launched EarShot, a multi-institutional network that assists orchestras around the country in mounting new music readings. Recent and upcoming Earshot programs have included the Detroit, Berkeley, La Jolla, Nashville, Memphis, Colorado, San Diego Symphonies, the New York Philharmonic, New York Youth Symphony, and the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. For more information visit www.EarShotnetwork.org. The Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute, launched in 2010, supports jazz artists who desire to write for the symphony.

Among the honors ACO has received are special awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and from BMI recognizing the orchestra's outstanding contribution to American music. ASCAP has awarded its annual prize for adventurous programming to ACO 36 times, singling out ACO as "the orchestra that has done the most for American music in the United States." ACO received the inaugural MetLife Award for Excellence in Community Engagement, and a proclamation from the New York City Council. ACO recordings are available on ARGO, CRI, ECM, Point, Phoenix USA, MusicMasters, Nonesuch, Tzadik, New World Records, InstantEncore.com, Amazon.com and iTunes. ACO's digital albums include *Playing It UNsafe* (March 2011), *Emerging Composers Series: Vol. 1* (February 2012), *Orchestra Underground: X10D* (June 2012), and *Orchestra Underground: Tech & Techno* (July 2014). ACO has also released *Orchestra Underground: A-V*, a groundbreaking album of multimedia works available for free streaming at www.vimeo.com/channels/orchestraunderground. More information about American Composers Orchestra is available online at www.americancomposers.org.

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This press release is available online at www.americancomposers.org/press

A.J. McCaffrey's Motormouth is commissioned with the support of Mr. Paul Underwood.

Ian Williams Clear Image is commissioned with the generous support of the Francis Goelet Charitable Lead Trusts.

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american composers orchestra

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2014-2015 Season Highlights

Friday, November 21, 2014 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Orchestra Underground: Monk's Sphere

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Theo Bleckmann, vocals
Ian Williams, electronics
Meredith Monk Vocal Ensemble

IAN WILLIAMS: *Clear Image* (World Premiere, ACO/Goelet Commission)

AJ McCaffrey: *Motormouth* (World Premiere, ACO/Underwood Commission)

LOREN LOIACANO: *Stalks, Hounds* (NY Premiere)

THEO BLECKMANN: *My Brightest Garment* (World Premiere, Carnegie Hall Commission)

MEREDITH MONK: *Night*

Friday, February 27, 2015 at 7:30pm – Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall
Orchestra Underground: Sins & Songs

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Shara Worden / My Brightest Diamond, vocals
Hudson Shad, vocal ensemble

KURT WEILL: *The Seven Deadly Sins*

MY BRIGHTEST DIAMOND: *Whoever You Are; We Added It Up; Looking at the Sun*

SARAH KIRKLAND SNIDER: Selections from *Unremembered*

DANIEL SCHNYDER: *draKOOL* (US Premiere)

CARMAN MOORE: *Tata Madiba* (World Premiere, ACO Commission)

Thursday, April 9, 2015 at 8pm – Rose Theater, Jazz at Lincoln Center
American Composers Orchestra: Blues Symphony & Beyond

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Uri Caine, piano

COURTNEY BRYAN: *Sanctum* for Orchestra & Recorded Sound (World Premiere, ACO/Jerome Commission)

URI CAINE: *Double Trouble* (revised and expanded, ACO commission)

WYNTON MARSALIS: *Blues Symphony* (NY Premiere)

Thursday & Friday, May 7 & 8, 2015 – The DiMenna Center for Classical Music
Underwood New Music Readings

George Manahan, Music Director and Conductor
Derek Bermel, Artistic Director

ACO's annual roundup of the country's brightest young and emerging composers.

Plus:

Jazz Composers Orchestra Institute

Summer Intensive 2015

EarShot New Music Readings

from ACO's National Orchestral Composition Discovery Network

coLABoratory: Playing It UNSafe

Laboratory for the research and development of cutting-edge new orchestra music

Artists and repertoire subject to change.